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FEATURES

Winchester School of Chinese Culture camp offers students mix of learning and fun

XIYUE ERIC HAN | CORRESPONDENT

August 26, 2025 . 6:00 AM — 5 min read

Campers at the Winchester School of Chinese Culture summer camp plant seeds during an activity. COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF CHINESE CULTURE

As another fun and eventful week comes to an end at the Winche
School of Chinese Culture (WSCC) summer camp, dozens of child

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5 to 11 go home with new experiences and lasting memories.

Whether cooling down at a water park or learning how to make Chinese scallion pancakes, campers enjoyed a vibrant mix of cultural learning and summer fun.

WSCC's summer camp is located at the Winchester Unitarian Society, near the heart of Winchester under the purview of Ruiming Huang, the program's manager. There are also several experienced teachers and teacher assistants (TAs) who bring many different skill sets and specialties.

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A group of campers enjoys a field trip. COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF CHINESE CULTURE

This year, the summer camp consists of eight weekly sections, with opening day this year on July 7 and running until Aug. 29.

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“The week for the kids starts at 8:30 on Monday,” says Huang, “but for the teachers, the week starts much earlier. Every week requires us to plan ahead for the activities that the children will take part in, shop for ingredients to make the delicious lunch served to every child which is made fresh every day, and much more.”

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A camper shows off his skills at making dumplings. COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF CHINESE CULTURE

Kids participate in four daily activities, such as Chinese culture class, Chinese language arts, traditional martial arts, dance, arts and c

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cooking, gym and music, explains Huang. The goal is to balance cultural learning and hands-on fun.

“We have special activities on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday,” he says. “On Wednesday, we have an afternoon field trip to a local playground for the kids to be able to enjoy the summer. Friday is a day-long field trip to various locations such as Canobie Lake Park, the Museum of Science, Parlee Farm and the Aquarium.”

Some of the activities campers have enjoyed this summer. COURTESY PHOTOS/WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF CHINESE CULTURE

Thursday afternoons have a very special activity called the Carnival. Huang explains TAs come up with a list of a couple of small, unique and inclusive games for the kids to play. Afterwards, they receive prizes, drinks and snacks.

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TAs are immensely important to the summer program, making sure the program runs smoothly and doing the behind the scenes work to ensure that the campers' experiences are the best they can be.

Campers stretch during an activity. COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF CHINESE CUL

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“Many of the TAs were old students that attended the camp many years ago,” Huang says. “Many of the kids admire and look up to the TAs, almost like older brothers and sisters. In Chinese culture, younger kids refer to their older counterparts as 哥哥 or 姐姐 which mean older brother and sister. The hope is for the young campers to grow and come back to the program to foster a new generation. Every single TA brings their own experiences, expertise and skills to the program.”

Many of the activities are taught by TAs who excel in that particular area. Classes such as dance, music and traditional martial arts require TAs who are exceptionally knowledgeable. TAs are encouraged to pitch their own ideas because, Huang explains, it helps enrich the experience and diversify the skills kids learn, and hopefully can use.

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The use of TAs goes beyond just activities, Huang says they help out in every aspect.

“TAs is what allows this camp to be what it is,” Huang says. “TAs help cook up the delicious food every morning, they help teach kids Chinese, they plan, set up and teach various classes. TAs take care of the kids on field trips, or when they are simply enjoying each other's company outside.”

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Campers not only enjoy activities, but also learn during the summer. COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF CHINESE CULTURE

The biggest part TAs play is being the middle ground between teachers and campers, being able to connect with both groups. TAs help make sure all kids of all abilities and skill sets are able to enjoy all the camp has to offer, such as spending time with a lonely kid during free time.

How it started

WSCC summer camp started back in 2009 with only a handful of students and with only a small fraction of the activities kids today take part in. Over the years, the program grew exponentially, mainly through word of mouth.

The program has also expanded its diversity. Huang says although the camp is a Chinese summer camp, there are kids from a variety of backgrounds such as South Korean, Japanese, and American.

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"It is amazing how people of so many different backgrounds and ages can come together and connect with each other," Huang says.

Campers enjoy an outing. COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF CHINESE CULTURE

Huang has been teaching at WSCC summer camp for more than a decade. Through her long tenure, one thing has been most rewarding: seeing the children grow, not just in their skills, but also as people.

"I have watched many kids grow from tiny children to full grown adults. I get to contribute and see their journey through their childhood, cheering them on during their highs, and comforting them during their lows," she says. "Although I only have them for a short period, knowing that I am making a difference in their learning, growth and future success, it makes it all worth it. And the little kids, when they come to me and sit on my lap and say 'I love you, Huang laoshi' it just makes me feel so warm a[illegible] reminds me why I do this."

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Winchester Community Music School set to expand, upgrade

The big events in Winchester Community Music School always take place in Nichols Performance Hall. With the school and its performances' growing in popularity, the hall and many of its amenities are due for an upgrade. The performance hall is one of the main areas that the school seeks to

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By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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